

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 R

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 061904

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR

SUBJECT: MORNING SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT REPORTS

1. BHUTTO ARRESTS OPPOSITION LEADERS

EMBASSY ISLAMABAD REPORTS THAT MOST MAJOR LEADERS OF THE PAKISTAN NATIONAL ALLIANCE (PNA), THE PRIMARY OPPOSITION PARTY IN PAKISTAN, WERE ARRESTED MARCH 17. BHUTTO'S ACTION APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN TAKEN IN RESPONSE TO PNA DEMANDS THAT PAKISTAN HOLD NEW NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS SUPERVISED BY THE JUDICIARY AND THE ARMY.
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THE CRACKDOWN HAS BEEN COMBINED WITH STEPS DESIGNED TO SHOW THAT BHUTTO HAS CONTROL OVER THE COUNTRY. THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY HAS BEEN SUMMONED TO MEET ON MARCH 26.

EMBASSY COMMENT: SOME OBSERVERS BELIEVE BHUTTO IS GIVING PNA LEADERS ONE LAST SIGNAL EITHER TO MODERATE

THEIR DEMANDS OR TO FACE CONTINUED INCARCERATION. THE CENTRAL QUESTION NOW IS HOW THE PUBLIC WILL REACT. BHUTTO HAS TAKEN A CALCULATED POLITICAL RISK, AND WE CANNOT PREDICT THE OUTCOME. (CONFIDENTIAL) ISLAMABAD 2663, 3/18.

2. UK: LABOR TO FACE CONFIDENCE VOTE

EMBASSY LONDON REPORTS THAT LABOR'S EFFORTS TO AVOID A SUBSTANTIVE VOTE ON THE PUBLIC SPENDING WHITE PAPER BY MEANS OF HEAVY-HANDED PROCEDURAL TACTICS HAVE BACKFIRED. THE CONSERVATIVES WERE INCENSED BY LABOR'S SHARP PRACTICES AND RESPONDED BY INTRODUCING A CENSURE MOTION. THE VOTE WILL TAKE PLACE ON MARCH 23.

EMBASSY COMMENT: OUR GUESS IS THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL WIN IN A CLOSE CONTEST, BUT MAY HAVE TO STRIKE A DEAL WITH THE LIBERALS OR ULSTER UNIONISTS TO PREVAIL. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE) LONDON 4578, 3/17.

3. SOMOZA FAMILY NEWSPAPER BLASTS US FOREIGN POLICY

EMBASSY MANAGUA REPORTS THAT THE MARCH 17 EDITION OF THE SOMOZA FAMILY NEWSPAPER, NOVEDADES, CONTAINS A VITUPERATIVE AND SOMEWHAT INCOHERENT ARTICLE ON ITS EDITORIAL PAGE CRITICIZING US FOREIGN POLICY, ESPECIALLY THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION'S INTEREST IN HUMAN RIGHTS. THE ARTICLE ALSO TAKES A PERSONAL SLAP AT THE PRESIDENT, SAYING HE "THINKS GOVERNING A PEOPLE IS THE SAME AS CONFIDENTIAL

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SHELLING PEANUTS."

EMBASSY COMMENT: THIS ATTACK MUST HAVE AT LEAST THE ACQUIESCENCE OF THE NICARAGUAN GOVERNMENT AND MAY PRESAGE FURTHER EFFORTS TO SUGGEST THAT US HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY IS EITHER ILLOGICAL OR BASED ON ULTERIOR MOTIVES. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE) MANAGUA 1276, 3/17.

4. EL SALVADOR: CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS CONTINUE TO DETERIORATE

EMBASSY SAN SALVADOR REPORTS THAT THE CRISIS IN CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS CONTINUES TO DEEPEN. ARCHBISHOP ROMERO HAS THE SOLID BACKING OF THE CLERGY IN HIS EFFORTS TO INVESTIGATE THE MURDER OF AN ACTIVIST PRIEST AND TO FORCE THE GOVERNMENT TO STOP HARASSING THE CHURCH. ROMERO HAS CANCELLED ALL SUNDAY MASSES EXCEPT A SINGLE CEREMONY IN SAN SALVADOR'S CATHEDRAL. SINCE THIS DECISION WILL BRING THOUSANDS OF WORSHIPERS INTO THE DOWNTOWN

AREA, THE GOVERNMENT HAS PLEADED WITH ROMERO TO RESCIND
HIS ORDER. LEFTIST EXTREMISTS MIGHT TRY TO USE THIS
CROWD FOR THEIR OWN ENDS, AND A MISSTEP ON EITHER SIDE
COULD RESULT IN EVEN MORE TURMOIL. (CONFIDENTIAL) SAN
SALVADOR 1338, 3/18.
VANCE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MORNING SUMMARY, ANTIAMERICAN FEELING, CHURCH STATE RELATIONS, ARRESTS, PARTY LEADERS, REFERENDUMS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 19-Mar-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977STATE061904
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: O: PFOTENHAUER
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770094-1084
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770342/aaaabjwi.tel
Line Count: 122
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 318f5cb5-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN SSO
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05-Nov-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3055744
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MORNING SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT REPORTS
TAGS: PFOR, PINS, PINT, SOPN, PGOV, PK, UK, NU, ES
To: JCS DIA MULTIPLE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/318f5cb5-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009